

THE MINTS OF RYE AND CASTLE RISING IN THE REIGN
OF STEPHEN.

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IN 1914, in a paper published in the *Numismatic Circular* on "Some Coins of the Reign of Stephen," I called attention to the fact that a series bearing the mint-name *Rie* had hitherto been confused with the coins of Castle Rising, and wrongly credited to that borough. With the exception that the British Museum Catalogue of Norman Coins, under Castle Rising, refers to my paper as raising a possibility of doubt, it seems to have escaped any attention, and the coins in question remain as they were. The attribution of coins reading *Rie* and *Riee* to Rye, the name of which town was in all charters and records of the twelfth century *Rie*, *Ria* or *Rye*, whilst that of Castle Rising was always *Risinges* or *Risingis* seemed to me so simple and certain that I did not then think it necessary to further prove it, but now I will endeavour to do so.

Both Castle Rising and Rye, if boroughs, were entitled to the privilege of a mint of one moneyer, but of one moneyer only at a time; of course there were many boroughs that never exercised the privilege at all. There came, however, a time when in consequence of political exigencies every possible mint in the east of England was called for. This was at the date of Stephen's second Coronation. The chroniclers tell us that in 1141 the power of the Earl of Gloucester and the Angevin Party was such that it ruled absolutely from the south-west of England to the north. Stephen was released from captivity at Bristol in exchange for the Earl of Gloucester on November 1st, 1141; but the latter refused a

condition that any of the towns then in his party's hands should be returned to Stephen. This meant that from south to north Stephen's mints had, one by one, fallen into his opponents' hands, and his dies were destroyed. Stephen held his Christmas Court, 1141, at Canterbury, and was there formally recrowned after the interregnum. His first coinage or type, Hawkins 270, had then run its full term of five years, and new dies would be necessary whenever a lost mint was recovered to the Crown, so we may be quite certain that the second Coronation was the occasion for ordering a second coinage, and the type, Hawkins 269, resulted, which would be ready for general issue probably about Easter, 1142.

Such is the story of the chroniclers, but that told by the coins is even more drastic in disclosing what a very little of England was left to the recrowned king. His second coinage is to-day plentifully represented from fifteen mints. Yet, with the exceptions of Oxford and York, which were only recovered later in 1142, every one of these mints is to the east of a line due north and south through London. In other words, when he was recrowned the King's money could be issued only in East Anglia, Essex, Middlesex, Kent and Sussex, and it was, therefore, a very profitable proposition for the limited number of boroughs within those confines to issue it. The natural result followed, dormant mints were revived, and boroughs that had never coined before now claimed and exercised their privilege of a mint and one moneyer under the Common Law, but really under that of Athelstan passed at Greatley in Hampshire.

Castle Rising.—Two of these boroughs were Castle Rising and, as I shall show, Rye, and they both commenced to coin for the first time in 1141, the closing year of Stephen's first coinage. We will consider Castle Rising, shortly, first. It follows that if a borough was entitled to one moneyer only at a time, and we have a continuous sequence of one moneyer, there is no room for any other. At Castle Rising this is the case. The legends of two coins when read together indicate that a moneyer named Bertold commenced the coinage here, and his name occurs only on the last variety of Stephen's

first coinage, that is, in 1141, with the mint-name *Risinges* contracted to *Ri* : a not quite certain attribution. He was, however, followed by Robert, who coined throughout Stephen's second and third coinages, Hawkins 269 and xviii, using the correct contraction *Ris* for *Risinges*. Finally, Stephen's fourth and last coinage, Hawkins 268, which was continued into the opening years of Henry II's reign, was issued by a moneyer named Hiun, with the borough's name in full as *Risinges* and *Risinge*. I need not stress the argument that if we have a sequence of three moneyers, or even of two, coining at *Ri*, *Ris* and *Risinges*, the correct mint-forms of *Risinges*, two other consecutive moneyers coining at a place reading *Riee* and *Rie* can have nothing to do with Castle Rising.

Rye.—We are indebted to Mr. L. A. Vidler for correcting the history of Rye in Saxon times, by explaining that under the influences of his second wife, Emma of Normandy, Ethelred II first promised the great lordship of Rameslie, which included Rye, to the Norman Abbey of Fécamp; that Canute, her second husband, granted it in 1035, and that Edward the Confessor and William I confirmed his grant. Hence in Domesday Book we find that in 1086 the Abbot of Fécamp, Normandy, held Rameslie *of the King*, that it contained no fewer than five churches, and that "in this Manor is the New Borough" with its 64 burgesses.¹ The late Dr. Round, in *Feudal England*, p. 568, tells us that we must look for this *novus burgus* of Domesday "at Winchelsea or Rye," but he leaves the question at that.

As, under the Common Law, only boroughs had the right of coinage, if we can prove that Rye had a mint and that Winchelsea never had, it follows that Rye was the New Borough. In our Volume VI, Major P. Carlyon-Britton showed that the Anglo-Saxon coins formerly queried, or doubtfully attributed, to old Winchelsea, were really from the mint of Winchcombe, and we know of no others that could possibly suggest a coinage at the Sussex town.

¹ The similarity of Domesday's treatment of the boroughs of Rye and Stockbridge will be noticed. See pp. 49-51 of this volume.

On the other hand, there is ample documentary evidence that in the twelfth century Rye was a borough, with a market, governed by its burgesses termed "the men of Rie," and later "the Barons of Rye," under their "Prudhommes," who, I suspect, were the two Bailiffs. Out of a common fund they were gradually buying back their town-dues and freedom from the Abbot of Fécamp, and used a seal of their own "as Barons of Ria." Only the burgesses of a borough could do that, or hold a common fund. For detailed evidence of all this I would refer readers to the cartulary of the Abbey of Fécamp, printed in the Calendar of Documents preserved in France, pp. 37-53.

The importance of Rye at this period may be estimated from an entry in the Pipe Roll for 1130, which seems to have been overlooked in local history. It is that "William Fitz-Robert of Hastings owes the returns for the *lastage* of Hastings, and of Rye." Thus the port dues of Rye are classed with those of Hastings, and accounted for directly to the King's Sheriff, and not through the Abbot of Fécamp. This, again, suggests the status of a borough.

We will now turn to the numismatic evidence which in this case is not a matter of opinion but of proof. It opens with a coin of the latest variety of Stephen's first type, issued, therefore, in 1141, and probably about the time of his second Coronation at Canterbury. It reads, obverse, ✠ **STIEFNE** :, reverse, ✠ **ON : RIEE** : Unfortunately the moneyer's name is illegible, but another specimen tells us, I think, that it was William (*Willelm*), and if so he was probably the moneyer William, then coining at Canterbury, and merely sent down to start the new mint. But with the new coinage of Easter, 1142, Hawkins 269, Rye supplied its own moneyer, Radulf, Rawulf or Raul, as he variously spells his name on the coins, and of his coinage we have to-day eight pennies and two (cut) halfpennies, from several different dies, which, therefore, indicate a considerable output from the mint. The obverses continue the same legend as before, but the reverses vary as ✠ **RADVLF : ON : RIE**, ✠ **RAPVLF : ON : RIE**, and ✠ **RAVL : ON : RIE**, for Ralph of, or at, Rye.

The provenance of these ten coins is corroborative evidence of their correct attribution, for seven of them I know, and probably all, were found in 1883 at Linton, which is within 22 miles of Rye. On the other hand, most if not all of the series left to Castle Rising were found in East Anglia. But if we can identify Radulf the moneyer with Rye the evidence is final.

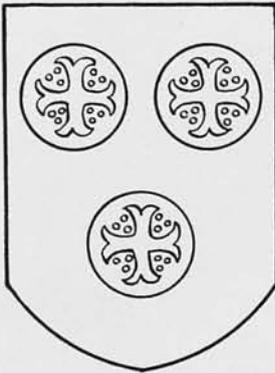
A moneyer was not the actual coiner, but usually one of the wealthiest burgesses who farmed the mint from the town, just as a Sheriff farmed the county. Some moneyers at this time founded churches, one at Norwich was the progenitor of the House of Howard, and another at London was Gilbert Becket, father of the Archbishop. So Radulf or Ralph, of Rye, as we shall see, was, or became, a very wealthy man—I wonder if he was the “Prudhomme”? Probably he continued coinage at the mint until the close of the reign, although we do not know of any coins of Rye after this second type. But that does not at all imply that there were none, for the later coins are fewer, and so rarer to-day. The reason why I believe that Radulf continued to coin at Rye until the accession of Henry II is that the mint would then be closed, for many of Stephen’s mints and all that were new during his reign were then suppressed, and as we find him transferred to Canterbury and coining there as Raul, from the commencement of Henry II’s reign, it is probable that he did not leave Rye until the mint was discontinued.

What the trouble was at Canterbury I do not know, but in 1176-7 certain moneyers there were heavily amerced or fined, and owing to this we are indebted to the Pipe Roll for clenching the argument that Radulf of Rie on the coins was Radulf of Rye. The entry is that “Radulf of Rye, moneyer at Canterbury, and his wife were fined 1,000 marks; they paid 100 marks and still owe £600”—a very large sum indeed in those days.

The story of Radulf, therefore, proves that his coins were from the mint of Rye, and, in turn, the mint at Rye proves that Rye was the “New Borough” of Domesday, for unless it was a borough it could not have had a mint.

PENY-YARD PENCE

Fig. 1.



Arms of Spence.
Guillim's "Display
of Heraldry."

Fig. 2.



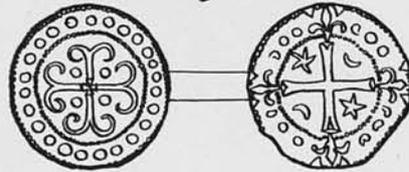
"A Silver Penny
coined at
Penyard Castle
near Ross, Herefordshire."
Bonner's "Perspective
Itinerary." Pl. xi, fig. 5.

Fig. 3.



Peny-yard penny.
Art Journal, 1859, p. 8.
"Excursions in S. Wales,"
by Mr & Mrs S. C. Hall.

Fig. 4.



Eltham "Coin" from Hasted's
"History of Kent," Vol. i, p. 60,
and from articles by
Charles Clarke & Geo. North, F.S.A.

Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.



Reverses of "Sterling" type jettons (temp. Edw. i. or ii.) in author's
collection. Obverses have full-faced busts as on silver pennies.